

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

A TOTAL WAR ON DRUG CARTELS

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ABSTRACT

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Illegal drugs are no longer just a domestic problem. The drug trade business is a multi-billion dollar enterprise that is run by international criminals. The drug lords behind these operations, non-nation-state actors, have become more powerful than the nation-states in their respective regions. The current "War on Drugs" strategy has offered little hope for any decisive victory; instead it has dealt primarily with domestic drug prevention, treatment, and market disruption. While solutions to this growing problem are complex, there is a need to take a bigger picture approach to this global situation; as a nation we need to declare a "Total War on Drug Cartels." In this paper, I will demonstrate that because illegal drug trafficking is so inextricably linked to international crime and terrorism, there is a critical need to increase Department of Defense initiatives, in conjunction with the other elements of national power, to develop a decisive anti-drug cartel strategy that will provide security for our nation and its citizens at home and abroad.

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A TOTAL WAR ON DRUG CARTELS

THE ILLICIT CONNECTION BETWEEN DRUGS AND TERRORISM

Illegal drug use has been a forbidden and clandestine part of our society throughout most of our nation's history. Drug suppliers were part of the criminal world, such as the Italian mafia, and used their drug profits to fund illicit activities and support lavish lifestyles. For the most part, these activities were contained within the boundaries of America. However, advances in communications, transportation, and globalization have virtually made every part of the world easily accessible and today's illegal drug business and its associated activities are no longer just a domestic problem.¹ Worldwide and national intelligence sources have identified the global drug trade as a multi-billion dollar enterprise run by international criminals that are providing financial support to global terrorism. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) refers to the phenomenon of increasingly close ties between powerful drug lords motivated by simple criminal profit and terrorists groups with political agendas as narco-terrorism.² Due to this illicit connection between drugs and terrorism, there is need for a greater dedication to counter drug operations. Colombia is the world's number one producer of coca and the associated drug products. Groups like the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) use drug money to acquire weapons they need to fight established governments in an effort to achieve their own political interests.³ Afghanistan's opiate trafficking, accounting for seventy percent or more of the world's supply, not only helped finance both the Taliban government and the al Qaeda terrorist network but was also reportedly advocated by Osama bin Laden as a way to undermine the Western culture. From the National Liberation Army in Colombia and Venezuela protecting cannabis and opium poppy laboratory operations, to the United Wa State Army producing and trafficking synthetic drugs in Burma, the finite list of terrorist organizations with connections to drug trafficking is extensive.⁴ The drug lords behind these operations, non-state actors, have become more powerful than the nation-states in their respective regions. The current "War on Drugs" strategy appears to offer little hope for any decisive victory; instead it deals primarily with domestic drug prevention, treatment, and market disruption. Because drugs are now a global threat and solutions to this growing problem are extremely complex, a broader and more direct approach should be taken as our nation executes "A Total War on Drug Cartels." Specifically, the Department of Defense needs to play a greater role in these drug wars through its support of the Global War on Terror. In this paper, I will propose a new national strategy for dealing with narco-terrorism through a greater commitment of Department of Defense resources, in coordination with the other elements of national power, to provide

greater security for our nation and its citizens at home and abroad. A total war against every drug cartel is required if we are to destroy this insidious enemy.

BACKGROUND OF UNITED STATES STRATEGY

Historically, our national drug control strategy has focused on reducing drug use by strengthening sanctions. However, despite the expansion of military operations within the counter-drug arena in concert with law enforcement agencies since the early 1980s, drug use by high school teens reached record levels in 2001.⁵ Military support to counter-drug operations has been mainly based on requests from local and federal law enforcement agencies in efforts to enhance their effectiveness. The Department of Homeland Security, formed after 9/11, has played an active part in preventing drugs and terrorists from entering our country. President George W. Bush outlined his plan to counter this threat in the 2003 National Drug Control Strategy:

We all know the drug trade is a business. Drug traffickers are in that business to make money, and this National Drug Control Strategy outlines how we intend to deny them revenue. In short, we intend to make the drug trade unprofitable wherever we can. Our Strategy is performance-based, and its success will be measured by its results. Those results are our moral obligation to our children.⁶

The United States is fighting narco-terrorism in several ways, but has not developed a strategy that unites anti-drug and counter-terrorism policies.⁷ The United States' policy should not simply be limited to just making the drug trade "unprofitable wherever we can." It should be focused on eradicating the threat entirely.

ASSESSING THE PROBLEM

An initial and thorough analysis is critical to assess the magnitude of the threat to our national security and to identify any links to international crime and terrorism. Asa Hutchinson, then DEA Administrator, made the following comments before the Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy, and Human Resources on 3 October 2001:

Clearly, international criminal organizations smuggling drugs into the United States pose a threat to national security. International drug trafficking that threatens to undermine governments friendly to the United States, or countries that have strategic interest to the United States, is also a matter of national security concern...

I appear before you today to testify on the connection between international drug trafficking and terrorism. As the tragic events in New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C. so horrifyingly demonstrate, terrorist violence is indeed a threat to the very national security of the United States...⁸

Furthermore, Paula J. Dobriansky, Undersecretary of State for Global Affairs, in a statement on 20 October 2003 also acknowledged the undeniable association between the illegal narcotics trade and terrorism, and emphasized the grave threat it presents in undermining the security of the Western Hemisphere.⁹

Eradicating transnational terrorism, currently the biggest threat to the security of our nation and to achieving a safe and secure environment in the United States and abroad, is clearly in our national interest. Drug cartels and traffickers, along with terrorists, are all forms of organized crime. Terrorist and drug trafficking organizations share many characteristics; they both operate globally and benefit from trends associated with globalization and thrive in countries and regions that lack strong government control.

"Twelve of the thirty-six groups on the U.S. Department of State's Foreign Terrorist Organizations List have been identified as being involved in drug trafficking."¹⁰ Some experts argue that nearly every terrorist group operating today raises some money from the drug trade.¹¹ Many terrorist organizations such as al Qaeda and Hizballah are directly involved in drug trafficking as a primary means to finance their activities.¹² Al Qaeda has benefited from the revenues generated from Afghan heroin sales, which exceed 70 percent of the heroin sold worldwide.¹³ Hizballah has effectively used its *fatwa* calling for the use of drugs as a weapon against the West and as a means of financial support for terrorist activities that threaten the security of the United States.¹⁴ Ironically, when a drug trafficker is apprehended transporting drugs, the focus of the investigation is normally on simple possession, not any potential links to terrorism that would be a much more important and critical crime.¹⁵

The drug trade is an extremely lucrative and secretive business. The large sums of money that can be amassed often go undetected by authorities.¹⁶ As an example, it is estimated that the FARC receives as much as \$300 million annually from the drug trade.¹⁷ In October 2002, a Colombian courier for the FARC was arrested in the United States for transporting 182,000 Euros into the country.¹⁸ Terrorist tactics employed by the FARC since 2002 include bombing the Colombian Presidential Palace, assassinations of key government officials, shooting at a civilian aircraft, and the bombing of a social club, which resulted in the death of 36 people and injury to 160 more.¹⁹ There are also strong indications that the FARC has established ties with the Irish Republican Army in an effort to improve its effectiveness in urban terrorism tactics, techniques, and procedures.²⁰

In the past, state sponsors provided funding for terrorists. As the global community continues to apply pressure on state sponsors of terrorism such as Iran, Syria, and North Korea to discontinue their support for terrorist organizations, the likelihood that terrorist organizations

will become involved in illegal drug trafficking as their main source of capital increases. Terrorist groups now look almost exclusively to drug trafficking as their main source of revenue. Interdiction of terrorist finances and shutdowns of “charitable” and other non-governmental front organizations have also increased the likelihood that terrorists will rely primarily on drug trafficking to finance their operations. Terrorist groups are also increasingly able to justify their involvement in illicit activity to their membership and long ago abandoned the idea that drugs would damage the moral basis for their cause.²¹ Experts have concluded that terrorists rarely let ideology get in the way of funding their activities.²²

DEFINING THE ENEMY

As Sun Tzu admonishes us on offensive strategy, “Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril.”²³ The use of such terms as “Global War on Terrorism” or “War on Drugs” has become catchphrases most Americans feel they can relate to. Unfortunately, these particular phrases are not helpful in strategy formulation, as the fight is not against a tactic (the act of terrorism) or an illicit product (illegal narcotics). A clear definition and understanding of the enemy (terrorist organizations and drug cartels) are undeniable prerequisites that must be achieved prior to decisively engaging and destroying them. It is important to discern and appreciate an organization’s motivation, goals, and tactics before attempting to proceed with any actions to guarantee greater success and to mitigate possible failures. Thorough knowledge breeds familiarity and permits empathy with an adversary, allowing for a more complete understanding of an opponent’s decision cycle presents a common sense approach to the problem. Understanding the ideology, strategies, and instruments of terrorists’ success can help identify how al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations operate. This understanding also assists in identifying the necessary steps to defeat the drug cartels. More importantly, it can give us the tools to ensure that history will not repeat itself.²⁴

PREEMPTION AS A POLICY

Preemption, the anticipatory use of force in the face of an imminent attack, has been broadened in the National Security Strategy of September 20, 2002 to include preventive war. This strategy permits the use of force in the absence of an imminent threat of attack to ensure a serious threat to the United States does not “gather” or grow over time.²⁵ United States policy objectives or ends need to be the total eradication of drug cartels throughout the world. “Strategy is all about how (way or concept) leadership will use the power (means or resources) available to the state to exercise control over sets of circumstances and geographic locations to

achieve objectives (ends) that support state interests."²⁶ Therefore, from the outset, the formulation of an ends, ways, and means calculus is needed. Educating the world about the plan and its objectives for a total war on drugs is the next step in gaining public support since national spending will inevitably increase across all the elements of national power. The United States has the highest gross domestic product (GDP) in the world. In a constantly evolving and often-unpredictable world, it would be advantageous for the United States to continually review and increase the percentage of GDP allocated to maintaining national security. This will take a strategic communications effort beginning with the President articulating his strategy against drug cartels and demonstrating direct linkage to our interests and values as a nation. Issuing public policy statements and press releases in concert with an information operations campaign will require the utmost in public diplomacy. Development of courses of actions or ways should focus on various strategic centers of gravity. Using Colonel John Warden's approach of looking at the enemy as a system, it becomes obvious that targeting begins with the most important element first -- the leadership of the drug cartels. This is the individual who heads the cartel, along with any communication and security capabilities. The next ring or target are those organic essentials at the drug source and the methods used for conversion to narcotics. Supporting infrastructure, such as roads, airways, and sea-lanes, follows this. The population of growers, distributors, and processors are next and finally, the mechanism of street soldiers. These systems must be attacked in a complementary fashion in order to reduce the effectiveness of the overall enemy, while ensuring the enemy does not inflict casualties or impact our system and subsystems.²⁷

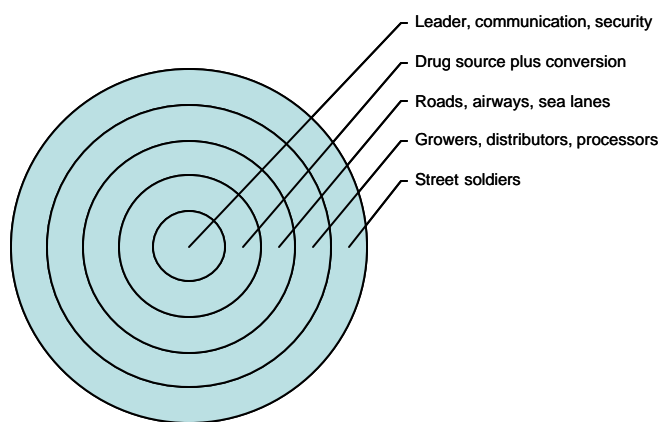


FIGURE 1. WARDEN'S BASIC FIVE RING MODEL AS IT APPLIES TO DRUG CARTELS.

Tools of national power or means must then be fully applied to carry out strategic concepts and achieve national objectives. Thorough analysis of military capabilities, public support, and world opinion should be continuously performed in order to better ensure success in applying means. The political decisions responsible for allocation of resources and the relevant use of the military and other instruments of power in this war are the responsibility of the administration. While it may be wise to use the military as the last resort, situations at times may warrant the early use of force in support of national political objectives. The battle against terrorism may dictate no other alternative except to respond with force in order to preserve vital national interests. Having clear military objectives, along with a clear chain of command will permit a use of force that is not only feasible, but also acceptable. When the public fully understands the link between drug trafficking and terrorist organizations, they will readily support such military efforts and will be able to rationalize the potential collateral damage when contrasted with some acts of terrorism.

The risk associated with this strategy, however, is the fact that there may be insufficient resources to ensure complete success. A general overview of existing military activities may lead the casual observer to an incorrect assumption that our tools of national power are already overextended in the Global War on Terror or the fight for Iraq. This resource issue is an area where any shortfall could bring about disastrous results as the nation prepares to implement a total war against drug cartels. Any full-scale initiative against drugs may require limiting national objectives and modifying the tools of national power to achieve specific national security goals. There is currently no reason to limit or withhold any resources required to achieve this vital interest. This extensive undertaking should be fully resourced with military, information, diplomatic, legal, intelligence, and economic tools required to win the war against narco-terrorists. Cost is always an issue in any operation regardless of size and scope; however, this factor should be weighed against the constructive outcome. Promotion of the effort to gain the confidence and support of the average American is crucial for success and will ultimately be key in overcoming anticipated uncertainties and difficulties resulting from increased expenditures and prolonged timelines.

TOTAL VERSUS LIMITED WAR

Drug cartels are deeply integrated with the power elites in many of the countries in which counter drug operations would be conducted. Because of these relationships a conscious decision, equivalent to the declaration of total war, would permit all the elements of national power to target these international criminals and thugs. History has shown there is no

possibility of negotiating with this enemy and that time normally works to the narco-terrorist's advantage. The ideology of these extremists is to fight until the end. Drug traffickers want to make an illegal profit, which in turn allows them to support the terrorist organization's achievement of their political goals. Such an enemy has one objective, where a superpower like the United States has many. The war in Vietnam, while a total war for the North Vietnamese, was a limited war for the United States. One of the lessons learned from this conflict was that before combat operations can begin, a clear understanding of the threat and supporting objectives is required. Additionally, a clear military strategy has the ability to provide a successful political outcome. Once committed to military action, there can be no alternative to victory.²⁸ Harry G. Summers, Jr., an influential author on the Vietnam War, did not favor the concept of limited war, as practiced in Vietnam, because it violated the essential tenets of a sound military operation.²⁹ Limited wars have limited objectives – clearly, total wars do not. A total war is necessary if we are to be successful in our fight against narco-terrorists. While the United States has tried to avoid being the world's policeman, drastic situations call for drastic measures. Drug trafficking organizations have crossed the line by financing terrorist organizations removing their previous protection under the auspices of law enforcement operations. Our obligation to preserve law, order, and civilization throughout the world substantiates the adoption of a policy of attacking these narco-terrorists with unparalleled military power. Although previous police actions have never been popular, past criticisms should not be allowed to overshadow the existing threat or diminish any of our initiatives in the total war against the drug cartels. The threat, while not a military force, can clearly be identified as a military objective.

NECESSARY INTER-AGENCY REORGANIZATION

In September 2004, General Peter Pace, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recommended the United States government capitalize on the success of the military's Goldwater-Nichols Act, which made the services a joint force. He suggested "a Goldwater-Nichols-like event for the interagency," which would require all of the elements of national power to work together, vice in stovepipes, to execute the global war against terrorism. The nature of the terrorist threat has changed the world with non-state actors and asymmetry playing a greater role. Though no easy solution exists, the goal is unity of effort in bringing all elements national power to bear on the transitional terrorists and narco-terrorists threatening America's national security. The Joint Interagency Task Force that General Pace suggests combines the traditional strengths of departmental expertise with the unity of effort of a cabinet chief or

agency leader in charge of an organization dedicated to accomplishing a mission for the President.³⁰

The Joint Interagency Task Force – South that currently conducts counter-drug operations in the Southern Command area of responsibility is a good news story and a possible model for the organizational design required to combat terrorism. The Task Force has been successful at intercepting drugs being smuggled into the United States, but more importantly, in developing a viable interagency organization that has developed trust and confidence. Its established unity of effort has put the focus on the mission versus departmental agendas.³¹

Of prime importance is the intelligence community's gathering and dissemination of accurate knowledge and actionable intelligence. Global terror and failing nation states are spawning both state and non-state threats, empowered by fluid financing, decisive information, freedom of movement, and the potential for weapons of mass destruction. Recent conflicts indicate that the probability the United States will face a symmetrical adversary in the next 25 years is decreasing, yet the Department of Defense continues to spend resources on future conflicts that require fighter aircraft, a blue-water navy, and an army of tanks.³² As the threat changes, the United States' rules of warfare or engagement should logically adapt in order to maintain our advantage and leverage momentum against the enemy. Additional resources such as applied intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance forces, and state of the art weapon systems will provide improved interdiction capabilities and allow for quick surgical strikes on the cells themselves. We need to capitalize on our proven technological superiority, exploiting the use of laser range finders, global positioning systems, unmanned aerial vehicles, satellites, combat aircraft, cruise missiles, air-to-ground missiles, and laser guided bombs in an all out effort to destroy the drug cartels. The anticipated result of this technological advantage would be fewer soldiers deployed for close combat operations, thereby reducing casualties associated with unconventional warfare. Another necessary capability is that of nation-building or stabilization, particularly security transition, so that once cartels are destroyed, the local governments can prevent them from coming back or spreading to neighboring regions. Subsequent constructive organizational and resource replacement of the void left by the destroyed drug organization should be considered as a military priority and accomplished by elements of the Department of Defense specifically established for this purpose. The obvious home for such an organization is in a branch of the United States Army; as the services downsize armor, artillery, engineer, and air defense branches, the leadership skills already mastered can be directly applied to the mission of nation building. Capitalizing on lessons

learned during recent operations in Afghanistan and Iraq provides an opportunity to enhance the prospects for long-term nation-building.

COLLABORATION: THE INTERNATIONAL EFFORT

By definition a global offensive stipulates coalition building, diplomacy, and coordination with international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to achieve favorable and enduring outcomes. To persevere for the duration of the war against drug cartels will require committed assistance and partnering with other organizations, such as the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union, along with a myriad of NGOs. These joint efforts should have a particular focus on peacekeeping and nation building³³ along with the reestablishment of political and economic systems that drug traffickers may have destroyed. In the concluding stages of this effort, the challenge will be focused on the effective rebuilding of nations, the maintenance of regional stability, law, and governance resultant of our collaborative efforts with international organizations. As evidenced in the current situation in Iraq and Afghanistan, victory in the post-conflict phase of future battles will be guaranteed by the success of American diplomacy, deterrence, and efforts to create alliances well before military action.³⁴

THE DEMAND-SIDE OF THE EQUATION

Drug demand reduction is the effort to reduce the use, abuse, and demand for narcotic drugs through prevention and treatment. As increasing drug use and abuse continue to attack the health, welfare, security, and economic stability of societies throughout the world, the need for demand reduction remains obvious. The Department of State's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) demand reduction programs are designed to support the President's national drug control strategy, integrating a broad spectrum of initiatives:

- bilateral training and technical assistance to prevent the onset of use;
- intervention at "critical decision points" in the lives of vulnerable populations to prevent both first use and further use;
- improved effective treatment programs for the addicted;
- broadened education and increased public awareness of the detrimental consequences of drug use/abuse;
- coalition building to mobilize the international community; and
- research on the effectiveness of these and other programs.³⁵

Treatment has become an accepted complementary supplement to law enforcement.³⁶ The decrease in casual drug use during periods of sustained availability demonstrates that prevention and training programs can succeed even though they receive less than 30 percent of the United States drug budget.³⁷ However, demand-side policies and results have never played a major role in the drug war. The logic behind demand reduction is essentially the same as the basic premise of zero-tolerance – if there are no drug users, there is no drug problem. Unfortunately, approaches to demand reduction versus zero-tolerance are dramatically different. Rather than attempt to legislate drug use out of existence through mandatory sentences, asset forfeiture, and drug-testing policies, reduction of demand focuses on two specific areas – substance abuse prevention and substance abuse treatment. The history of drug education and prevention reflects a collection of highly problematic approaches. For the better part of the twentieth century, programs attempted to scare people away from using drugs. But that tactic did not work. The problem was simple – the propaganda was a series of untruths, and most of those in the target audience knew it. The 1960s witnessed the advent of an ideology grounded in the belief that the more information young people had about drugs and their effects, the more negative their attitudes would become, with the lower usage of illegal drugs being the desired end state. That illusion was shattered in the 1970s, however, when studies demonstrated that students who knew the most about drugs had a more favorable attitude toward their use and felt more inclined to use them.³⁸

THE CURVEBALL OF LEGALIZATION

There are examples of proposed legalization that would permit the use of psychotropic drugs based on the contemporary American alcohol model. As an example, cocaine, marijuana, and heroin would be sold in retail stores to those over 21 years of age.³⁹ The debate on legalizing drugs is not new and there are many advocates for and against legalization. On one hand, proponents of legalization even go so far as to say that drug prohibition finances and enables terrorism. The supporting premise argues that the sale of illegal drugs on the black market provides a considerable profit for the operation of terrorist organizations. If legalized, these drugs would sell for significantly less, thereby reducing profits. A gram of opium in Afghanistan worth three to seven cents sells in Canada for an average of \$39.00. With legalization advocates assert a major portion of terrorist funding would be depleted.⁴⁰ Another claim is that the accompanying reduction of prison populations as a result of decriminalizing drugs would allow the shifting of law enforcement resources to interdiction and supply reduction efforts.⁴¹

There is no consensus among Americans on the subject of legalization of drugs, especially since legalization is contrary to commonly accepted national values. Moreover, there is no empirical evidence to definitively show drug that use will be reduced. Additionally, legalization is politically unpopular.⁴² The effects of drug laws on drug use are considerably more uncertain and complex than is generally acknowledged by advocates on either side of the drug policy debate. The current state of knowledge, based on research examining minor variations in enforcement with a drug prohibition regime, does not provide a basis for projecting the consequences outside that regime. There are too many unknowns to predict the effects of drug legislation with any specificity, and advocates on either side of the debate who suggest otherwise should be greeted with healthy skepticism.⁴³

OPPOSING ARGUMENTS

A DOMESTIC ISSUE

The opposing argument to my thesis is that drug use is merely a domestic issue and there is no need for military involvement. The thought here is that although drug use has led to America's moral poverty, destruction of our inner cities, and high crime rate, it is not a national security interest. Some view this problem as restricted to America, not having any impact outside its borders, and that the demand for drugs by American society is the center of gravity that should be attacked. Such advocates recommend improving the criminal justice system as it relates to drug users, teaching responsibility, and touting the fact that crime does not pay. In turn, this philosophy will presumably decrease violent crime, out of wedlock births, and eventually improve morality.⁴⁴ In actuality, the issue is much bigger and more complicated. Globalization, vast amounts of money, and established links to terrorist organizations characterize the real threat to America.

A LAW ENFORCEMENT ISSUE

Another argument is that drug organizations are mostly anonymous and interchangeable; therefore the removal of one of these organizations is of limited usefulness. An undeniable advantage of the America's open society and economic system is liberal international trade. The negative aspect of free trade, however, is that with time foreign dependency increases. Consequently, trying to seal the nation's borders to prevent the flow of drugs is not practical, and probably not possible, because of the national and international implications and ramifications.⁴⁵ Moreover, deterring possible criminals with random border checks probably has little impact on the illegal drug industry. Internal policing and education

may diminish this problem, but such actions do not attack the root causes, namely the drug organizations.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Narco-terrorism is a complex threat that cannot be ignored. Both drug trafficking organizations and terrorist groups are dangerous and destructive, relying on intricate cells to achieve their goals. These cells are difficult to identify and link together, adding to the complexity of the situation. The risks inherent in dealing with these groups and their obvious worldwide threat dictate the implementation of a dedicated and extensive national anti-narco-terrorist strategy with the objective of permanently removing such organizations -- in effect, a "Total War on Drug Cartels." This proposed policy should first complement and support the nation's principal effort, the Global War on Terrorism, and then progressively be integrated with counter-drug efforts to create a unified policy; the end state being the eradication of international criminal organizations.

Dealing with the narco-terrorist threat is critical, however, it should not imply the need for an immediate rush to failure. The decision to execute a total war should be well thought and deliberately planned, as it will undeniably necessitate substantial amounts of funding, resources, and commitment for an extended period of time. Laying the groundwork for success begins by conveying in explicit terms to the American public the urgency and magnitude of this call. The education of the public should harden for this to garner national resolve and support for this campaign over time. Support for this effort will likely increase with each successful action.

An initial assessment and the subsequent modifications to current policy should be made in an effort to obligate and possibly increase spending along all areas of national power that target the drug cartels and infrastructure. Concerning American military capability; analysis of recent and existing worldwide conflicts notes the emergence of a discernible shift from traditional warfare to asymmetrical threats. In order to meet and prevail against these less conventional threats demands changes by the Department of Defense in an effort to transform organizations and modifying the training of America's military. Additionally, defense modifications need to include guidelines for continuous evaluation and improvement of tactics, techniques, and procedures by all agencies involved in the fight against drugs.

International coalition and consensus building will also be vital in achieving success against narco-terrorists. Any proposed policy changes that call for preemptive measures for attacks on illegal drug cartels abroad, require authorization and the possible assistance of other nations. "At-risk countries" must be convinced of the economic and political advantages of

eliminating the drug trade within their boundaries and they also need to be assured there will be sufficient support in rebuilding their nations. Although, the United States is one of the most prosperous nations in the world, it is unrealistic to expect it will become the sole source of aid, monetary and otherwise, that might be needed for reconstruction abroad. In the areas of nation-building and economic assistance, it is imperative that international aid be provided.

The benefits of instituting the policy outlined in this paper clearly outweigh the risks. While some effort would be needed in the domestic education of societies to prevent illegal drug use, demand reduction, and treatment for those already addicted, destroying the narco-terrorist sources should become the principal focus. It is only plausible to deduce that with the destruction of the essential elements of the cartels, domestic drug availability would decrease. In turn, the subsequent decline in availability would lessen the domestic demand for drugs, accompanied by a reduction of drug-related crimes and the gradual return of human dignity to the families and citizens impacted by this insidious threat.

A primary responsibility of the United States government is to provide a secure and safe environment for its citizens. The illegal drug trade and its terrorist connections aims to undermine and destroy our society from within, thereby, threatening our national security. As the world's only superpower, a moral and national obligation exists to intervene and rid the world of drug cartels along with the accompanying financial infrastructure that supports terrorist organizations. This clearly is a challenge of enormous magnitude, and in finding a resolution, many sweeping changes need to occur domestically and internationally. It is a monumental task and an arbitrary time limit cannot and should not be established. Nonetheless, it is imperative that we institute this new approach in an effort to preserve America's enduring beliefs, ethics, and values. Assuredly, it is a task that will provide unimaginable dividends for our nation and the world.

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ENDNOTES

¹ DEA Drug Intelligence Brief, *Drugs and Terrorism: A New Perspective*, (Sept 2002), 2; available from <<http://webster/dea/pubs/inte/02039/html>>; Internet; accessed 22 January 2005.

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